

## **Region 6**

(Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas)

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### **Regional Activity**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region VI has been proactive in promoting Fatherhood initiatives and activities, in supporting Region States' conferences, training networks, and attending/participating in States' symposiums and events.

There have been several key events held in the five state area to focus attention on the issues of fatherhood, healthy marriage, and positive youth development with the potential for a positive impact on America's families. Since 1998, the Region VI Office has successfully conducted Mid-Winter Leadership Conferences which have included workshops and presentations on various Fatherhood Initiative topics. The Regional Administrator recently presented a workshop, "Positive Family Formation" at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Southwestern Regional Conference during February 18-20, 2004 held in Phoenix, Arizona; he delivered plenary address and presented a breakout session about ACF's Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Initiatives at the Weed and Seed Regional Conference held in Dallas, Texas during February 25-27, 2004; he presented at the National Head Start Association's (NHSA) Male and Father Involvement Pre-conference where he discussed the Federal Fatherhood Initiative and the importance of male involvement in Head Start on April 21, 2004; and he participated in the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI) Forum held in Chicago, Illinois during May 14 and 15, 2004 where he spoke and moderated a session, "The Fatherhood and Marriage: We Need Both." This conference afforded the Regional Administrator the opportunity for networking with peers, practitioners, clergy, community leaders, and others concerned about the future of Black-American families, children, and youth.

The Regional Administrator continues to promote and support all Fatherhood projects and initiatives in Region VI (States and Local/Urban and Rural Jurisdictions) to improve the well-being of children and families in Region VI. At Region VI events, model programs and best practices are showcased to provide customers, stakeholders, and leaders the latest cutting edge programs and practices. Information and research related to responsible fathering and male involvement is distributed at all Region VI conferences, symposiums, and meetings. The Alpha Phi Alpha Project is supported by the Regional Administrator and other key staff (including managers and team leaders) in numerous capacities.

Regional Office staff with the lead for fatherhood initiatives and projects frequently communicate with states, grantees, and local organizations, attend and participate in state and local activities, and provide assistance where requested.

## **State Activity**

### **Arkansas**

Regional Office CSE Program Specialist and Fatherhood Lead met with Lois Boyd, Executive Director of the Lee County Family Resource Center in Marianna, Arkansas during her visit to the Dallas Regional Office on March 12, 2004. Ms. Boyd is involved in Fatherhood activities at the local and state level. She was provided information regarding the Federal Fatherhood initiative and funding opportunities available through the Office of Child Support Enforcement by partnering with the Arkansas IV-D agency, specifically Section 1115 and SIP grants. The Arkansas Child Support Enforcement Program Specialist has shared this information with Arkansas IV-D officials and will follow up with Ms. Boyd on partnering with Arkansas child support officials for future Section 1115 and SIP grants available through the Federal Child Support Office.

### **Louisiana**

#### **Robbie Endris**

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**Access and Visitation/Fatherhood**

Louisiana has two providers funded through the Office of Child Support Enforcement. The first program is a demonstration project in the 14<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court in Lake Charles, Louisiana. State child support officials would like to see the results of this small model project to determine what their options would be for similar implementation in others parts of the State. The goal of this project is to give non-custodial and custodial parents the skills and tools necessary to effectively co-parent their children which in turn will improve the parents' support of the children, both emotionally and financially.

The second program is through the Louisiana Family Council who serves the Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and New Orleans areas. They have approximately 75 cases open-to-date. They are working to positively impact children in the area of parental involvement by working to improve the quantity and quality of emotional, physical and financial participation of fathers in their children's lives. This is to be accomplished through their mediation services, co-parenting plans, visitation order assistance, legal service referrals and employment and educational referrals. The Support Enforcement Services funded

through state block grant TANF funding is to provide low-income non-custodial parents access to legal services through a contract with the Louisiana State Bar Association. Services include assistance with establishment of both parents visitation orders and mediation in order to assist both parents be involved in the lives of their children. The Louisiana State Bar Association receives on-line referrals from Support Enforcement Services and the case is referred to the appropriate legal service depending upon the location of the non-custodial parent.

On April 20-21, 2004, Grambling State University in partnership with the Louisiana Office of Community Services conducted a Fatherhood Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Conference focused on maximizing the role of fathers in the Child Welfare experience. Presenters included Bennie C. Thompson, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Chicago State University and author of "Challenges to Manhood" curriculum; Mark Perlman, M.A., Presenter/Trainer, The National Family Preservation Network and author of "The Nurturing Father's Program"; Dan and Gail Tate, President and Executive Director of the Louisiana Family Council and author of Fresh Start Dad's Curriculum"; Jaiya John, Ph.D., author of "Black Baby White Hands."

Dan and Gail Tate, President and Executive Director of the Louisiana Family Council conducted a meeting with local ministers and the president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. The focus of the meeting was mentoring children of prisoners. Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., provided information and training on the Amachi Program, a faith-based national mentoring model for children of incarcerated parents.

During the year in the Fatherhood Initiative, the Avoyelles Progress Action Committee Head Start Program in Marksville, Louisiana has an open door invitation for father to volunteer. Fathers take turns coming to the center to read for the children, to participate in Fatherhood week, Father/Child Thanksgiving Luncheon, Buddy Breakfast, Father Resource Center, and the "Family Field Day."

The Charlotte Provenza's Early Head Start (EHS) Centers (Istrouma and Glen Oaks) provides a list of fatherhood activities to parents at each EHS center and a fact sheet about services that offered to fathers of each center. The fatherhood activities include: Dad's Day at the Center, Christmas Party at Wacky Bear, Chuck E. Cheese Party, LASM Discovery Depot Trip, and Picnic with Family Fun Days. The services offered to fathers include: Father Thirst Groups, a thirteen week

course where important topics concerning fatherhood are discussed; Job Readiness Training, free job readiness training to dads to enhance their job skills and improve their economic status; Dads Days and Family Fun Days, events for dads and their families to promote dads spending more time with their children; and Dad Support Services, offer services to assist dads in life skills training, GED preparation referral, technical college placement assistance, legal guidance, job placement assistance, case management services, counseling referral and money management.

Another report from Louisiana provided information about the curriculum, "Six Steps to Success" in February 2004. On March 26, 2004, fifteen fathers graduated from the program. Currently, they are having regular meetings on Tuesdays evenings at the Head Start Center. The next curriculum will begin probably in June. They average 15 to 20 fathers at each meeting.

The Vernon Parish Head Start program held week-end meetings for its' Fatherhood Involvement Initiative participants. Shirts with a Fatherhood emblem were given to participating fathers. Alton Bailey and Chris Portz, male teachers in the Head Start program were co-sponsors of this group. Fathers were given an over-view of the importance of this group in the development of their children and encouraged to be role models for other fathers in the program.

CRDC Head Start Program includes a number of Fatherhood activities for the Dads. Activities are fathers have been out to eat breakfast with the children, fathers have volunteered as community resources to come out to the centers to speak to Head Start families on fire and personal safety, fathers have assisted on the nature walk field trip, fathers have served as resource speakers and provided handouts on the subjects of caring for children and the importance of children having up-to-date immunizations. Last but not least, Fathers participated in "Donuts for Dads," where they came to the Head Start Centers to spend time with their children and have donuts and coffee.

The Total Community Action, Inc. Office for Children, Youth and Families Fatherhood Project is involved in the following activities:

A collaborative effort is underway with local providers of services to fathers to host a Fatherhood Conference on June 26, 2004 at a local university. The goal of this conference is to educate fathers regarding available resources in the community. We highlight the numerous responsible men of all races and socio-economic backgrounds that are

fulfilling their duties as fathers. Finally, this will be an opportunity for fathers to share experiences and knowledge regarding fatherhood with one another.

This Saturday, May 22, 2004 the Male Involvement component of the program is hosting the Annual Kite Flying Day in a local park for fathers and their children. There will be plenty of kites, food, soft drinks and fun for everyone.

A family literacy program entitled "Read to Me Daddy" will be implemented throughout the program during the month of June. This program is designed to have fathers read to their children a minimum of 3 days per week. The goal is to promote literacy in the home through the active involvement of fathers and father figures. We plan to operate the program over the summer and continue it through the next school year.

Representatives from the grantee and delegate agencies will attend the National Head Start Institute on Father Involvement Conference in Dallas during the month of June.

#### **New Mexico**

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#### **4th Fatherhood Initiative Partnerships Meeting Held**

On April 29, 2004, the New Mexico Child Support Enforcement Division sponsored the fourth meeting for Fatherhood Initiative Support Groups in Albuquerque. There were about 60 attendees from Federal, State and local organizations, most of who were from the Albuquerque area, but included representatives statewide from Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Artesia and El Paso areas. The agenda included remarks and presentations from: Jacqueline Baca, Program Manager, Voluntary Paternity/Fatherhood Unit, New Mexico CSED; Stephanie Gonzales, Director, New Mexico CSED; Liz Stephanics, Deputy Secretary New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD); Charles Stuart, Director of Incarcerated Fatherhood Program, National Fatherhood Initiative; Robert Pacheco, Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center; Head Start Presentation: Nan Nash, Family court Judge, Second Judicial District; and Bernie Ortiz, Voluntary Paternity/Fatherhood Unit, New Mexico CSED. Three recent pieces of child support legislation concerning interest on arrears, statute of limitations (effective 5-19-

2004 custodial parent with a new case can not pursue back support for more than 12 years of arrearages), and amnesty (public hearings are needed before implementation 12-15-2004). The New Mexico HSD is emphasizing Access, Quality and Accountability for all of its programs, including child support, TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid.

The keynote speaker, Charles Stuart, delivered an excellent presentation on incarcerated fathers and the importance of their involvement in the lives of their children. Other topics involved programs for juvenile dads, voluntary paternity in New Mexico, Latino fathers and families, and male involvement with the kids in Head Start programs, and ways for parties to effectively deal with legal and Family Court issues. Planning for future fatherhood activities/meetings were also discussed with a consensus that Albuquerque which is centrally located would be a great fall location, possibly in October 2004. Attention getting handouts were provided to attendees from New Mexico CSED, from the presenters, and from the Federal office.

In 1996, the Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) partnered with the 30 GRADS programs in the State. **GRADS** is a federally funded program at schools which enables teenage parents to complete their high school education while on-site day care is provided. **CSED** conducts presentations once or twice a year at each site and provides written educational materials and videos to **GRADS teachers**. This effort continues.

In 1999, CSED and the Children Youth and Families Department, the New Mexico Head Start Program, and the Administration for Children and Families, Region VI, entered into a partnership to provide Head Start personnel and families information on voluntary establishment of paternity and child support services. Through direct presentations and distribution of informational materials, CSED reaches approximately 7,700 head start families statewide. This partnership is continuing.

In recent years, CSED has become involved in addressing fatherhood concerns. Through fatherhood support groups, CSED has provided information regarding a father's rights and responsibilities and services available. The fatherhood initiative effort is expanding in New Mexico. CSED works with fathers groups such as the NM Young Fathers Project, GRADS & DADS, La Vida Institute Circulo de Hombres, Ayudantes, Adolescent Family Life Program, as well as Head Start programs, and the Department of Corrections.

The CSED Voluntary Paternity Unit continues to render presentations to various groups, i.e., faith based organizations, county health offices, WIC, Native American tribal census offices, family service organizations, male involvement groups, and correctional facilities.

**Oklahoma**

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**Fatherhood Partnership**

The partnership between the Child Support Enforcement Division and the Maternal and Child Health Service, State Health Department has continued to promote public awareness on Fatherhood issues and to educate teens on parental responsibility (Dads Make a Difference Program). Numerous pairs of teen peer educators and adult advisors have been certified. Millwood School District has provided the program to 150 middle school students. Two other school districts taught the Dads Make a Difference Program during the 2002-2003 school years. Dads Make a Difference is endorsed by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.

The Child Support Enforcement Division has partnered with Oklahoma head start centers, day care centers, hospitals, libraries, primary schools and other organizations to promote the benefits of establishing paternity, the importance of fathers in the lives of their children, and providing presentations and child support resource information.

**Oklahoma Fatherhood and Marriage Initiatives Compliment Each Other**

The Oklahoma State Head Start Collaboration Officer recently provided information on how the state's local programs are busy undertaking fatherhood activities and complementing the Marriage Initiative effort. Activities range from having a day for dads to come to school with the children for a portion of the day to providing training in fatherhood issues as part of parent training. Meanwhile, the Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies has offered training sessions on fatherhood, one of which included a two-part training session offered on the Marriage Initiative. All of these training opportunities for Head

Start are being offered as a result of requests from the Oklahoma Head Start Association and the CAA Executive Directors.

Additionally, a number of Head Start and CAA staff have been trained by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative as "train the trainers". In turn, the Oklahoma Head Start Association now has a representative on the committee that coordinates state activities of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, which includes the state-level fatherhood initiative activities.

In July 2003, the first-ever Oklahoma Fatherhood Summit took place in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma sponsored by COPE, Inc., the National Fatherhood Initiative and the Department of Human Services. Approximately 150 individuals attended. Leon R. McCowan, Regional Administrator, Administration for Children and Families, rendered the luncheon address focusing on the Federal Fatherhood Initiative, the importance of children and families, and the importance of marriage. The ACF Region VI office showcased a colorful display focusing on fathers and children. The Summit will continue in the summer of 2005.

## **TEXAS TITLE IV-D FATHERHOOD PROJECTS**

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### **Section 1115 Demonstration Grant– "The Bootstrap Project"**

The CSD received \$105,254 (Federal grant award) for the "Bootstrap Project - Mediation, Partial Child Support Reimbursement and Jobs Program". The grant is for the period September 30, 2001, to May 30, 2004. The project is in the evaluation phase with all sites ending program services on February 29, 2004. This project provides job-training stipends to young, low-income fathers and provides other services that will assist these young men find employment and become better parents. Texas Fragile Family sites in four Texas cities (Austin, Houston, Laredo, and San Angelo) are providing these services.

### **Section 1115 Demonstration Grant - Incarcerated NCPs Project**

In September 2002, the CSD received a Section 1115 grant award entitled the "Family Reintegration Project: Increasing Collections for Paroled and Released Non-Custodial Parents in Texas." The grant is testing strategies for increasing the number of cases in which paroled

and released NCPs regularly pay child support. In addition to promoting employment and the regular payment of child support, the demonstration project is testing ways of achieving family reintegration and parent-child contact. The project is operating in Houston and El Paso. The project will be evaluated by the Center for Policy Research, a nonprofit research firm.

### **Section 1115 Demonstration Grant – Tarrant County Employment Partnership**

In September 2003, the CSD received a Section 1115 grant entitled “Employment Partnership Project: Workforce Partnership for Unemployed NCPs”. The project goal is to design and implement strategies to improve the process of referring and serving low income fathers who are unemployed and under-employed and cannot meet their child support obligation. The Tarrant County Workforce Development Board will direct the 17 month project through a contract with the OAG/CSD.

### **Section 1115 Demonstration Grant – No Kidding – Straight Talk from Teen Parents**

In September 2003, the CSD received a Section 1115 grant entitled “No Kidding – Increasing Paternity Awareness and Establishment with Teens and Young Parents”. This project links together the OAG/CSD P.A.P.A. – “Parenting and Paternity Awareness” -program with the Peer Assistance Network of America to test a new approach to educating teens and young parents about paternity and child support issues. PAPA is a curriculum developed by the CSD and made available to all secondary schools in Texas. The curriculum offers information to young people on the rights and responsibilities of parenting. The curriculum is targeted to grades 6 through 12. CSD provides in-service training to teachers and other community-based organizations.

### **Texas Male Involvement – Fatherhood Coalition**

The CSD is working with a group of public and private agencies on the Texas Male Involvement Coalition to sponsor and conduct a series of regional training events for professionals working with men and fathers. These events include information on child support and paternity establishment as well as information on program design, development and evaluation. Coalition members include: The National Fatherhood Initiative- SW Region, Texas Fragile Families Initiative,

Texas Department of Health, Head Start, the Texas Youth Commission, and others

### **Non-Custodial Parent Referral Project –**

The OAG/CSD and the Texas Workforce Commission have developed collaboration with the local workforce development boards and the Courts to identify, refer, and provide services to non-custodial parents who need employment services. This project, originally piloted in Bexar and Harris Counties (Houston Works), is now being conducted statewide. In addition to IV-D judges referring parents through the courts, the OAG is providing TWC with a monthly data tape of potentially eligible non-custodial parents.

### **OTHER TEXAS FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES**

#### **National Fatherhood Initiative, Southwest Region Office**

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**[www.fatherhood.org/tx.htm](http://www.fatherhood.org/tx.htm)**

The Southwest Region of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) seeks to improve the health and well-being of children by reducing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood. The NFI defines father absence as a lack of physical, emotional, or spiritual connection between fathers and their children. The primary message of the NFI is that fathers play a unique and irreplaceable role in children's development. NFI conducts the following activities: 1) coordinates a multi-media, public awareness and education campaign on the consequences of father absence and the need to promote responsible fatherhood; 2) organizes Community Fatherhood Forums across the region; and 3) operates the Texas Fatherhood Resource Center (TFRC), which provides individuals and community-based organizations with fatherhood-related resource materials.

This spiritually-based organization helps fathers understand and develop their role. They specialize in community events such as fatherhood seminars, essay contests and father-to-father small groups designed to encourage and support men in their role as dads.

**Center for Successful Fathering, Inc.**  
**Eric Whitfield, Interim Executive Director**  
**13740 Research Boulevard, Suite L-2**  
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**(512) 335.8106**  
**800.537.0853**  
**eric@fathering.org**  
**www.fathering.org**

Founded on the belief that children need the balance of a mom and a dad. Its mission is to educate and equip both men and women for the essential role fathers play in raising their children.

**Strong Fathers-Strong Families**  
**J. Michael Hall**  
**P.O. Box 136188**  
**Fort Worth, Texas 76136**  
**(817) 301-4086**  
**mikehall@strongfathers.com**  
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Strong Fathers-Strong Families is a training, technical assistance, and facilitation organization that is focused on strengthening children by strengthening fathers and families. Through staff training, consultation, and event facilitation, Strong Fathers-Strong Families works with Head Starts, Public Schools, and Churches as well as other organizations to improve the educational environment in order that men may become more involved in the lives of their children. Strong Fathers-Strong Families plans and facilitates events at the campus, organizational, and community level to bring men together with their children in the presence of other men to discover their true strength as fathers. Strong Fathers-Strong Families facilitates events such as Bring Your Dad to Head Start Days, Dad & Kid Reading Night/Day, Head Start Father Forums, Head Start Dad and Kid Book Look (Literacy promotion), staff awareness trainings, and Father Involvement Staff Training.

J. Michael Hall, executive director is the father of two sons who has worked as a special education teacher, a teacher of the gifted and talented, an elementary and middle school principal, and a regional field office coordinator in the fatherhood field. Mike has presented at many national conferences including the National Head Start Conference in New York, Anaheim, and Dallas, he has presented at various state and regional Head Start conferences as well as the

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, Texas Middle School Association, Texas DARE Officers Association, The Texas Conference for Safe and Drug Free Schools, The Texas Education Agency Parent Involvement Conference as well as hundreds of schools and Head Starts around Texas and the nation.

**Dallas Area Dads (DAD) Coalition**  
**Liz Duncan, and Juan Carrion, Sr., Co-chairs**  
**YMCA Downtown Dallas**  
**Phone: 972.560.3892 and 972.560.3891**  
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The purpose of the Coalition is to increase community awareness regarding issues of father absence, and create an environment of community support to nurture fathers in their relationships with their children. The vision of the Coalition is to create and sustain unique partnerships and programs that: 1) fulfill the needs of fatherless children and, 2) provide activities and services that connect, encourage and support fathers. The mission of the DAD Coalition is committed to expanding the capacity of faith and community-based organizations and other entities to support fathers in meeting the emotional, spiritual and materials needs of their children. The DAD Coalition will also serve as a catalyst for public policy discussions of fathers and families among local, state and federal agencies.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Greater Dallas Leadership Summit on Fatherhood Held**

On May 7, 2004, **Region VI ACF staff** participated in the first ever-held Greater Dallas Leadership Summit on Fatherhood held at the Lakewest YMCA. The focus of the Summit was to bring leaders together from the eleven sectors to dialogue on the fatherhood initiative and the issues that surround young men in becoming responsible, committed, and nurturing fathers. Dr. Wright Lassiter, President, El Centro Community College in the heart of Downtown Dallas, gave the **Invocation**, Phil DiCasolo, Chief Operating Officer, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas, gave **Special Remarks**, and Michael Hayes, Office of the Attorney General, served as **Master of Ceremonies**, and John Chacon, Executive Director, National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) Southwest Region, **presented the NFI Update**, and J. Michael Hall, Executive Director, Strong Fathers Strong Families rendered the **Keynote Address**.

The eleven sectors included individuals from: Health, Social Services, Community, Volunteers, Business, Media, Law Government, Education,

Faith, Civic, and Philanthropic. Each sector through facilitators decided what commitments they could make to the DADs Coalition and enhance the working relationship between the partners to assist young men become responsible and committed fathers.

Regional Office staff will continue to participate in coalition meetings, promote further dialogue with community partners, and provide other assistance, if asked.

**Tarrant County Fatherhood Coalition**

**Charles Scoma, Chair**

**Phone: 817.808.3933**

**Post Office Box 820010**

**Fort Worth, TX 76182**

**Tarrant County Fatherhood Coalition  
(a.k.a. Tarrant County Fatherhood Initiative)**

Mission Statement: A collaboration to strengthen the role of fathers, men and families in the lives of children in Tarrant County.

The Tarrant County Fatherhood Coalition holds meetings and special events focusing on young dads and all fathers. In the past year, their meetings have included training on the PAPA curriculum developed by the Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Division, and Male Involvement/Male Health issues, job training and job referrals. Annually, they hold a community-wide, collaborative effort to raise awareness about the importance of father's involvement in the lives of children. The event, "Celebrate Fatherhood," is held in June to celebrate responsible fatherhood in Tarrant County. Several committees work together for this event to take place.

**ALLPRODAD**

All Pro Dad's Day is a monthly event before school hours where fathers and their children meet with other dads and kids at a local restaurant or school cafeteria for breakfast. They hear great speakers on a wide range of family topics, spend time together and are equipped with resources to strengthen their relationship.

Coming to Dallas in September, 2004 is Dallas All Pro Dad's Day. Dallas Team Captain Ed McQueen is currently recruiting interested

fathers to kick-off All Pro Dad's Day. There will be a \$5 charge per person which includes breakfast. For more information, email him at: [emcqueen@Munsch.com](mailto:emcqueen@Munsch.com)